




## Getting Her From 'Going' to 'Gone'

Kristen Howell, MSW  
Chief Programs Officer  
Dallas Children's Advocacy Center

### Domestic violence is the leading cause of injury to women




- One in four women will be physically assaulted by a partner
- One in three teens will be physically assaulted by a boyfriend
- Every 12 seconds a woman is battered in this country



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Women are more likely to be injured from domestic violence than by car wrecks, muggings, and rapes combined.



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## LEAVING A VIOLENT RELATIONSHIP IS THE MOST DANGEROUS TIME

She has a 75% greater chance of getting killed after she's left the relationship

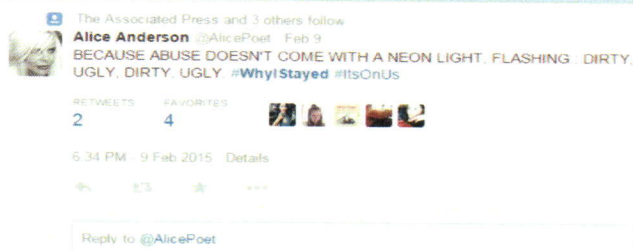
 **Safe Horizon** @SafeHorizon · Dec 8  
"In half of cases, homicide was around the time victim took steps to leave."  
#domesticviolence #WhyIStayed [trust.org/item/201411251...](http://trust.org/item/201411251...)

9 3

## ABUSIVE PEOPLE ARE MASTER MANIPULATORS



They manipulate everyone.  
The same confusion SHE feels,  
Professionals, friends, and co-workers also feel...is HE  
abusive, or does SHE have the problem?



## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HAS LONG BEEN PROVEN TO BE:



Pervasive  
Deadly  
Intergenerational  
Horrible for women to live through  
Impossible for children to survive and thrive in



WITH THAT IN MIND, IT IS NOT ENOUGH  
TO SIMPLY TELL HER TO LEAVE.

Your job is NOT done at that point.

HOW MANY TIMES HAVE YOU HEARD IT  
TAKES AN AVERAGE OF 7 TIMES TO  
LEAVE A VIOLENT RELATIONSHIP

Is that with intervention or without?



## Transtheoretical Model of Change



- Precontemplative
- Contemplative
- Preparation
- Action
- Maintenance

□ James Prochaska, University of Rhode Island. *The Transtheoretical Approach: Crossing Traditional Boundaries of Psychotherapy.*

## Precontemplation



- She is **not aware** that she is being abused and is **not interested in change**
- She will use **denial, minimization, and rationalization** when approached about this issue
- Fear and confrontation are not effective at this point—just make her capitulate and then retreat when she's disappointed you.
- Your job: Raise awareness



## Contemplation (There is hope for the future)



- ☐ Knows she is being abused
- ☐ Is weighing the pros and cons of change
- ☐ She will be open to talking with someone
- ☐ May be interested in information on abuse or resources
- ☐ She can finally name the problem
- ☐ Your job: resolving ambivalence

## There is Light at the End of the Tunnel



- Don't move too quickly into an action plan.
- Give her hope for a violence free future
- Convey to her that you BELIEVE her...she's testing the waters
- She may retreat or deny it later....don't take this personally. You have planted an important seed.



**Angela Black** @AngelaKBlack · Oct 18

**#WhyIStayed** Because I couldn't accept that the person who was sweet, loving, and kind to me was the same person who was spiteful and cruel

🔍 9 ⭐ 11 ...

## Preparation (*Let's Get Real*)



- She knows she is being abused and is planning to make some changes to end the abuse
- She needs to hear the plan....she may not implement it yet, but this is her information gathering stage.
- Be patient, but real with her.
- Your job: help her identify appropriate change strategies

## Action Phase (Cheerleader: *I am so proud of you!*)



- ☐ She is determined to be free of abuse
- ☐ She knows a different life is possible, and that it requires action.
- ☐ She is ready to take action
- ☐ Your job: help implement change strategies and learn to eliminate potential relapse



**Jazz Jones** @Jas4mine · Sep 23

#WhyIStayed its my fault #WhyILeft It was never my fault



8



12



## Maintenance Phase (*You did it!*)



- ☐ Her abusive relationship is over
- ☐ She may still be dealing with him—he continues to harass her, stalk her, take her to court, send her confusing messages.....the ONLY thing that is different is that it no longer rattles her—it does not have control over her any more.
- ☐ She will have to develop her own identity—identity in the house is the identity of the abuser.
- ☐ Your job: develop new skills to maintain



## Is it HER fault if she goes back or is it OURS?



How many of your clients haven't left the relationship because you used the wrong intervention: you pushed her toward action and she was in precontemplation



**The Pixel Project** @PixelProject Oct 22

RT @AngadKaurKhalsa: What survivors know is that it's never as simple as walking out of the door. #WhyIStayed  
[kristof.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/10/13/why...](http://kristof.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/10/13/why...)

Nicholas Kristof



## SO WHAT IS YOUR JOB IN THE STAGES OF CHANGE?


You FACILITATE the change



**BatteredNotBeat** @BatteredNotBea1 Oct 6

"Leaving an abusive situation "a process, not an event." YES. #WhyIStayed  
 Paradox of Abusive Relationships via @TIME [buff.ly/Z9pMoH](http://buff.ly/Z9pMoH)


TIME.com



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## TOO OFTEN WE ASK: WHY DOES SHE STAY




We should ask instead: What will make her leave?  
How can I facilitate that?



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## Consider it a marathon...

- And leaving is Mile 5
- Is your role to help her get ready to run?
  - Is it to help her run that first mile
  - Is it to coach her to push past mile 5
  - Or are you her distance coach?

 Preschool Gems and 3 others follow  
 **REDBOOK** @redbookmag · Sep 22  
 "As any battered woman can tell you, the leaving can feel harder than the abuse." #WhyIStayed redbk.co/6012oUV4  
 **REDBOOK**



THE VERY SKILLS THAT ALLOWED HER TO  
SURVIVE THE RELATIONSHIP ARE  
DIFFERENT THAN THE SKILLS NEEDED TO  
LEAVE THE RELATIONSHIP

Our job is to help her develop a different  
skill set. She's got the fortitude; we simply  
must equip her with a different skill set to  
move her through the stages of change



Must know her worldview:

Two types of people get stuck in violent  
relationships.

Must understand which one you are dealing with to  
know how best to help.

## Worldview: I'm not safe



- Behavior toward abuser might look like:
  - Ignore/deny
  - Make amends
  - Sweep away the event
- Replace with these behaviors:
  - Set a limit (name it in her head)
  - Take a break
  - Call it not okay: accountability (even if it is just in her mind)

## Worldview: All People are good, problems can be solved



- Sometimes this person's greatest motivator is the realization that her children are growing up in a totally different home.
- Explore the fantasy she has of him holding the break-up. That would be ideal. But it's probably a dream. How can you shore up the strength to be the bad guy. What will that look like? Let's prepare.






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 **Francesca** @Ayoo\_nana97 Nov 8  
**#WhyIStayed** because I thought I was strong enough to fix things and make them better if I just tried harder, did more, and did it perfectly  
 10 retweets 15 likes

 **Mimi Anne Malarkey** @medarlinv Sep 23  
**#WhyIStayed** he was broken, I thought I could fix him  
**#WhyILeft** he broke me instead  
 20 retweets 26 likes

Ananna Huffington and 4 others follow

 **HuffPost Divorce** @HuffPostDivorce Sep 22  
 "I believed I could love the abuse out of him." **#WhyIStayed** [huff.to/1rhq1Jl](http://huff.to/1rhq1Jl)  
 HuffPost Divorce



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**CHARACTERISTICS THAT HAVE HELPED HER SURVIVE:**

## Capitulation – a Learned Skill



- Learning not to capitulate – this has been an important survival skill
- Consider how she capitulates to you – and how that drives a wedge between her and people who will help her
- Making decisions for her is the WORST thing to do. We must encourage, motivate, and create space for her to be a problem solver

## Identity of One



- Abusive homes have a single identity – the abuser's
- Until she begins to determine her identity, she will not be able to attract safe people in her life – and so she will refuse to leave him
- Point out to her her different identities and help her use those to make decisions (as a mom, what should you do here...what does the mom in you know is the right answer here)

## Forgiving and Forgetting



- Survival in the house has meant creating collective amnesia
- Helping her keep track of the pattern of behaviors is important
- But so is increasing her awareness that HER behavior had LESS to do with HIS behavior than he led her to believe
  - Point out her recognition of 'the rules'
  - Point out when he wrong foots her
  - Point out that sometimes she just can't 'win'



Laurel @chibi\_lulu · Sep 23

"It'll get better soon" #WhyIStayed "He's never going to change" #WhyILeft  
[firstgiving.com/fundraiser/Lau...](http://firstgiving.com/fundraiser/Lau...)



## Deciphering Lies from Truth



- He has told her no one will believe her or help her...is that a lie? Or is that the truth?
- He has also told her that he will kill her when he returns...does she believe that?
- Then you must recognize that her long-term safety is ultimately the deciding factor for her
- You must know the difference between the child abuse world and the domestic violence world....child abusers are put away for decades; domestic abusers are put away for a week.



hushlilacweekend @CharlieWojdak · 20h

Because I was too scared to move. #WhyIStayed

## Facing Scrutiny and Disbelief



- Imagine the irony of the domestic violence situation: we hate her for staying with him, but it is because she was duped.
- Yet, when she reveals abuse to others, they express scrutiny (maybe he didn't mean it that way) or disbelief (you must be making this up—he would never).
- The public scrutiny and disbelief actually reinforce her decision to go back with him!
- We must better prepare her to withstand S & D.



**Ateliana** @lth604kt Nov 7

**#WhyIStayed** telling people who you respect that the person you love hits you is humiliating. The shame is overwhelming. **#WhyILeft** God

7 11

## Clarity NOT Consensus



- She will seek consensus, but we must help her get clarity
- She must learn to make statements about what happened to her. Which means she must believe that what happened DID happen. And she must believe that someone else believes her.
- Then she can describe it as an experience and not an identity or a question (which helps her ultimately break free of ALL violent relationships)



**Rachel McKibbens**  
@RachelleMcKibbens

Follow

**#WhyIStayed:** because my word was the only evidence.

82 90

6:35 PM · 9 Sep 2014



## The tape in her head



- He has total power over her at all times because of the tape he has given her
- She must create a new tape...a new mantra about herself.



**Erin J** @Miss\_Erin\_J · Apr 18  
 #WhyIStayed I didn't think I could do better

← 2 ★ 2 ...



**Kacy Livingston** @KacyLivingston · Oct 15  
 Because I believed him. #WhyIStayed  
 Because I don't deserve to be emotionally manipulated. #WhyILeft

← 1 ★ 14 ...

## Safety Dial is Turned Off



- In order to live with someone who is violent, she has had to turn off her 'safety dial' or her gut feeling about safety.
- You must help her recognize that her fears, her anxieties are HELPING her. Yet, she will want to run/numb them.
- She will need a plan to cope with awareness of fears
- Then she will need help learning to prioritize safety



## IT'S IMPORTANT TO KNOW THE WORLD WE LIVE IN:

Going underground is no longer an option



## HER GOAL HAS TO BE TO TURN THE SYSTEM ON HER SIDE

And stay safe in the meantime.



**NNEDV** @nnedv · Dec 18

Many victims stay because they don't know how the law could protect them.  
Learn more from: [womenslaw.org](http://womenslaw.org) @MomCBS #WhyIStayed

3 retweets 4 likes

## Increase Support System



- She should begin to tell people about her situation
- She should talk to a few select people about being able to call on a moment's notice, or having her kids call them at a moment's notice for help
- She should tell someone in her neighborhood about her situation



**The Pixel Project** @PixelProject · Oct 8

RT @WCA\_Boise: #WhyIStayed "I was isolated from my family and friends, I had no one and didn't think anyone would forgive me." DV Survivor

1 1

## Talk openly to her children



- About the violence.
- She doesn't need to turn them against dad, but she does need to begin to talk openly about the reality of their home
- Many families live in one reality and talk about their home/values/experiences as if they live in a totally different reality.
- She should begin to have discussions with the kids about the 'true reality' at home



**WhyIStayed WhyILeft** @Winglessfly8 · Dec 21

#domesticviolence #WhyIStayed because I wanted my kids to have a father.  
#whyIleft because I wanted my kids to have a mother.

10 13

## Begin to prioritize SAFETY



- Shift the goal from GET OUT to GET SAFE.
- Help her begin to recognize the pattern—pattern of behavior vs. isolated incident
- Help her begin to understand the game—capitulation is key to survival, but it is a killer to her soul.
- She needs to stay safe in the moment—one skill set—and plan to get safe in the long-run—an entirely different skill set.

 Crystal Reimer and 16 others follow

**womenshealth.gov** @womenshealth Oct 23



Safety planning can mean the difference between a #whyIleft story and a #WhyIStayed story. #DVchat go.usa.gov/G9a5

  15  3 ...

## Help her Widen the Lens



- What do you know about the PATTERN of abuse?
- What can you do to help her understand about that pattern? Are you getting caught up in the blow-by-blow? or do you ask questions like:



## Understand the Pattern of Abuse



- Tell me about the first assault
- Were you ever afraid before then?
- What have you tried to do to get safe?
- What is your gut feeling about his treatment of the children?
- What happens when you make a mistake? What things are categorized as "mistakes" in your house?

## Peddle Hope



- Hope is the 'wonder drug' for change. If YOU do not have it, she CANNOT have it.
- Consider two types of hope: Agency-related hope and pathways-related hope
  - Agency-related = global hope....I can do this. It is WORTH it to do it. (vision)
  - Pathways-related hope = Here's HOW I can do it. (process)
- Are you communicating to her that you see her as capable of leaving and as having the steps/skills necessary to leave?

## PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY PLANNING IS AS IMPORTANT

### YOU SHOULD TEACH HER HOW TO:

- Predict (her response)
- Prepare (for anything)
- Prevent (getting hooked)
- Wrong-footing her is his MO. She must stop imagining HIS response and start planning her own

## STAYING AWAY MEANS SHE MUST LEARN TO CONTROL HERSELF—NOT PREDICT HIS BEHAVIOR:

She's got to know he'll try multiple tactics to get his way.  
She's got to figure out what her "hook" is.



**The Smut Slut** @KaraAllison · 17h

**#WhyIStayed** if I only loved him more, cleaned better, was nicer to him, did more for him eventually he would love me again..wouldn't he?

## HIS BEING NICE IS THE MOST BASIC THING FOR HER TO BE PREPARED FOR

She thinks he hates her, that he will be happier  
without her around.

## She should prepare for tactics like:



- ☐ Him being a victim
- ☐ Anger
- ☐ Sadness
- ☐ Promises of change
- ☐ Threats
- ☐ Persistence

## Promises of Change:

Can she figure out what stage of change he is in:



- ☐ Precontemplative--does he acknowledge the abusive tactics at all? (Emotional and Physical)
- ☐ Contemplative--does he recognize why he does it?  
(What excuses does he use to rationalize behavior)  
(Can he tolerate a conversation without rationalization)





- ☐ Preparation—what steps is he willing to do to create change?
- ☐ Action—will he take those steps?
- ☐ Maintenance—will he work at it for an extended period? Can he tolerate taking action without immediate results?



### Over time, is she willing to:

- ☐ Take fewer of his phone calls
- ☐ Not 'bite' when he says something provocative
- ☐ Not respond to emails
- ☐ Stop defending herself
- ☐ Stop explaining herself
- ☐ Accept that he may not like her or agree with her decisions/rationale for things....it's okay!
- ☐ Call the police when she's scared or he breaks the law.



**Crissy** @Crissy80 Oct 10

**#WhyIStayed** I believed it was my fault even after leaving for awhile he still had control

5 4 ...

SOMETIMES IN ORDER TO BE ABLE TO  
DO THIS, SHE HAS TO IMAGINE WHAT  
HE WILL TAKE FROM HER

What is the most important thing to her and has he  
threatened it or demonstrated that he will fight her for  
that very thing?



Jennifer Perez (JJ) @jymoeva /h  
#WhyIStayed told me the kids would hate me if i tore the family apart by  
leaving his family & church got involved told me i needed to stay

6:06 AM · 22 Apr 2015 · Details

If she can't fight him alone (she can't!!)...Who  
can she get on her side? She should begin  
preparations for that TEAM long before she  
engages in the fight



BWCCADV @dvcommission · Sep 23

"Abuse thrives only in silence" -Leslie Morgan Steiner #whyistayed  
#listenbelievespeakout [ted.com/talks/leslie\\_m...](http://ted.com/talks/leslie_m...)

 TED Talks



OUR JOB IS HELP HER KNOW THE  
LONG-TERM IMPACT OF HER DECISIONS  
AND HELP HER PREPARE FOR THE WAYS  
HE MIGHT TRY TO HURT HER DOWN THE  
ROAD.



REMEMBER THOSE TWO WOMEN...WE  
ARE WORKING TO MOVE HER TOWARD  
THE MIDDLE:

Capable of being safe

Capable of taking control

But not falsely believing all are safe

Not falsely believing that she must solve this alone

## KEEP THE FOCUS ON SAFETY AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Keeping your message focused on these create more opportunities for her to begin to evaluate his behavior through the lens of a parent and a healthy person

### Focus on improving her relationship with her child

- ☐ Do you believe that abusers are good parents?
- ☐ Do you believe that she is capable of providing for her child?



Collette Winters @ColletteWinters Feb 17

#domesticviolence #whystayed #vawg @humansofny "He put me in the hospital when I was pregnant with her."

"He put me in the hospital when I was pregnant with her. The next day he started crying, begging for forgiveness. He said: 'I'm so sorry, I was drunk, I need you so much.' So I took him back. The next time it happened, he managed to convince me that it was my fault. He said that he wouldn't have gotten so angry if I had paid more attention to him. So I started thinking that I could be better. Then it happened again. Honestly, I stayed with him so much longer than I should have because I was afraid of becoming the stereotype of a single black mother."



RETWEET  
1

FAVORITE  
1



2:54 AM · 17 Feb 2015 Details

🔗 📷 📌 📎

Hide photo



## What is your role in keeping the family safe?



- ☐ The impact of violence on kids is profound.
- ☐ It is not enough to tell mom to leave.
- ☐ It is not enough to say mom is not protective.
- ☐ We **MUST** work together to get mom safe so that she can protect her children

## Case Scenarios



- ☐ A client walks in and reports abuse the first time. She's been beat up. What do you do?
- ☐ A client says she's fed up and ready to go. What do you do?
- ☐ A client says she has left 5 times, but this time is different. What do you ask to find out if that's true?



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